



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL & MUSEUM COMMISSION

November 7, 2023

CWO4 Christopher Ellison
Marine Inspector, United States Coast Guard
Sector Buffalo, NY
Inspections Division
1 Fuhrmann Boulevard
Buffalo, NY 14203

RE: U.S. Brig *Niagara* Operations for 2024

Dear CWO4 Ellison,

I am writing to express the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission's (PHMC) intent regarding the operation and maintenance of the restored U.S. Brig *Niagara*. The *Niagara* serves as an ambassador of Pennsylvania's maritime history and is an integral and dynamic facet of the educational experience at the Erie Maritime Museum. As a sailing school vessel, the *Niagara* engages trainees with the maritime and military history and traditions of Pennsylvania, the Great Lakes and the United States.

PHMC intends to continue operating the *Niagara* as a sailing school vessel well into the future. However, a safe and successful sailing program requires that ship maintenance and preservation be prioritized. As such, PHMC has made the decision that the *Niagara* will not operate commercially as a sailing school vessel in 2024. PHMC's priority for the next year and possibly more is to clear our two outstanding CG-835s, to tackle deferred maintenance and to make major systems upgrades to the ship via a multi-million-dollar Commonwealth Capital Project.

PHMC is scheduling a comprehensive material survey of the *Niagara* to begin this fall at homeport. This survey, to be conducted by a certified professional marine surveyor, will assess the condition of the ship so a comprehensive repair plan and long-term maintenance plan can be developed. We plan to take the *Niagara* to shipyard in spring 2024 to address the stern issue, replace the propellers, complete a below the waterline survey and to potentially undertake items outlined in the above the waterline survey to be completed this fall. Following the spring 2024 shipyard and based on the findings of the comprehensive survey, PHMC will commence completing deferred maintenance projects and systems upgrades during the remainder of 2024 and likely into 2025.

PHMC is looking forward to making this significant investment in the maintenance and preservation of the U.S. Brig *Niagara* as it will ensure the ship's safe operation as a sailing school vessel and educational asset for years to come. We appreciate the guidance of the U.S. Coast Guard in these matters. If you or your colleagues have any questions or concerns, please feel free to be in contact with Jim Hall, Site Administrator of the Erie Maritime Museum & U.S. Brig *Niagara*, and William Sabatini, Executive Director and Fleet Captain for the Flagship Niagara League.

Sincerely,


Andrea Lowery
Executive Director

CC: James Hall, Site Administrator, Erie Maritime Museum & U.S. Brig *Niagara*, PHMC
William Sabatini, Executive Director & Fleet Captain, Flagship Niagara League
Melissa Mann, Director of Historic Sites & Museums, PHMC